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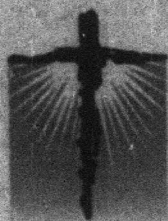
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# Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

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No. 50



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

FINAL ISSUE  
FOR 2009

Due to postal regulations that limit The Baptist Record to 50 issues per year, this issue marks the final publication of newspaper for 2009. The next issue will be dated January 7, 2010. The deadline for news and photographs to be printed in the January 7 issue is December 31.

The staff of The Baptist Record wishes for you and your family a most joyous celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and a Happy New Year. Thank you for your faithful support of this important ministry of Christian information.

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## Chinese cities present opportunities

BEIJING (BP and local reports) — In the past 20 years, central China has been growing cities at a record pace: 223 villages and towns in central China have reached a population of more than one million each, with an additional 250 cities topping 400,000.

For rural people who are moving to urban areas in record numbers, the growth presents new opportunities. "Salaries are much higher in the cities, so these cities are experiencing an influx of people," says Naomi (name changed for security reasons), a Christian worker. "One city may have a population of about one million people, but it might grow to six million in just a few years."

Still, in this central China's constellation of lost cities Christians comprise less than one one-hundredth of one percent of the population. "In addition to the cities, we try to work with the villages because many of [these people] will go to the cities," Naomi explains. "If we can reach the family, then they will send a believer's influence to the city."

The progress happening today is built on the past. When China closed its borders in the 1940s, prayers for believers there did not stop. Neither did God's Spirit. When workers returned to survey the areas decades later, they found more believers than when the borders closed.

"We found young people who said they believed because their grandparents had told them about Jesus," Naomi says. "Even when conditions were very difficult, their families found ways to explain their faith."

Southern Baptist work continued in the 1990s among the house churches there. In a spark of revival in 2000, about 1,500 people made decisions for Christ in one town. "Their influence," Naomi notes, "has spread to other areas."

The Wongs and the Chos (names changed for security reasons) are two couples who found faith during that revival and moved to one of the population centers to work.

Mei Ling Wong says she was a tough case. Her older sister had moved to the city earlier, but each year she returned to their hometown to witness to her family.

"It took 10 years," Mei Ling says. "At first I told her burning incense and worshipping our gods had been part of our culture for thousands of years. I would not believe in a foreign god. Then she said the offerings we give to our ancestors, to our gods, could not have been taken by the gods. Those gods did not have hands, did not have arms, so they could not take the offerings. I never thought about that."

Traditionally, she says, Chinese are Buddhist, but they also worship their ancestors and the gods in nature. Most villages have a banyan tree, and everyone worships that tree. "I asked the name of this foreign god, and my sister said He is the heavenly God of all things and Jesus. I knew then I had to believe in Him."

Mei Ling's husband Samuel took a little longer to accept Christ as Lord and Savior. "Mei Ling is my second wife," Samuel says. "My first marriage ended in divorce before I became a believer. If either of us had been a believer then, we would have known much more about how to make our marriage work."

Samuel noted that even among believers, many couples have marital problems. Often husbands who go to work in cities will set up a second household with a mistress. Sensing the importance of working with such couples, Samuel and Mei Ling began counseling them in building Christian marriages.

"We counsel some privately, and we also have marriage enrichment seminars," Samuel says. "I write for the newspaper each week to offer advice for believers who want to improve their marriages."

The local newspaper became interested in the Wongs' ministry after they printed brochures and distributed them in the community. The newspaper asked him to begin writing a column, in which he includes Scripture and a Christian perspective.

"We need more training," Samuel says. "China does not offer this kind of training."

The Chos agree that training is essential to what they do as well. However, their focus is on children. "For us, counseling families about their children is important," Dae Ling Cho says. "When couples become believers, they don't know how to raise their children. If they do nothing, the children won't study, and they won't succeed in life. We try to give them scriptural principles to help."



STUDY IN CONTRASTS — Chinese men playing an ancient card game on the banks of the Yangtze River in the shadows of the modern city of Chongqing reflect the contrasts in today's China, where many rural citizens have moved to large cities seeking new opportunities to make a living. (BP photo)

Dae Ling's path to becoming a Christian took her a little farther from home. She moved to Europe for six years to study. A friend began sharing her faith, encouraging Dae Ling to pray the sinner's prayer.

"My friend became a believer because someone else witnessed to her and gave her a Bible. She began at the beginning and read only one sentence per day. After 14 days, she knew she didn't have to be afraid of the dark anymore because God was there."

"She turned her life over to Him. She gave me a Bible and a book to read. I became a believer in 2002."

After she returned to China, friends introduced Dae Ling to Daniel (name changed for security reasons). She shared her faith with him and he also became a believer.


They dated and eventually married. Today they minister to families.

"The work we do gives us ways to discuss our faith," Dae Ling says, "but it also gives us opportunities to share with those who do not believe yet."

WHO'S  
WHOSE MISSING?  
MISSION?

LOT LIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING  
National Goal: \$125 million





## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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# Remember the martyrs

Life for a Southern Baptist missionary and his family is never easy. That's not to say there is no joy for them, because there is indeed great joy in the service of the Lord. They have been called by God and have surrendered to His leading of their own free will, and there is no greater thrill than helping to lead people to salvation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Still, it's not easy. There is the worry of being separated by great distances from loved ones who need them, such as elderly parents or children in college back in the U.S. There are the manifestly foreign cultures they encounter, from violent religious extremists to passive pantheists. There are the difficult twists and turns of raising children — yea, teenagers — without the support system back home.

They seldom complain about the conditions under which they serve, whether it be a lack of electricity and potable water or the political maneuverings within the convention that commissioned them to their important work. They just go about their God-ordained mission, winning souls and oblivious to all the roadblocks the Evil One places in front of them.

Some of them have paid the ultimate earthly price for obeying God's call on their lives. While records indicate only 21 Southern Baptist missionaries on the field have met a violent end in the 158-year history of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board/International Mission Board, that's 21 too many of God's specially-chosen people.

During this season of international missions emphasis across the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention, may we pause for just a few moments to remember those servants who were faithful unto death:

• **March 4, 2003** — Bill Hyde, working in Philippines. Killed by a terrorist bomb planted at Davao City Airport.

• **December 30, 2002** — Bill Koehn, Martha Myers, and Kathy Gariety, working at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Jibla, Yemen. Murdered by a Muslim extremist.

• **April 21, 1998** — Charles W. Hood Jr., working in Colombia, South America. Shot to death in his front yard by robbers.

• **March 23, 1995** — Chu Hon and Kei Yi, Khabarovsk, working in Russia. Murdered in their locked apartment.

• **March 27, 1991** — Lynda Bethea, working in Kenya. Beaten to death by highway robbers near Kijabe, Kenya. Her husband Larry was also brutally beaten but survived.

• **October 2, 1990** — Mary Anna Gilbert, working in China. Killed in crash of hijacked Chinese jetliner in Guangzhou, China (teacher with Cooperative Services International).

• **November 26, 1986** — Libby Senter, working in Liberia. Murdered along with her daughter Rachel.

• **October 11, 1985** — James Philpot, working in Mexico. Shot dead during an altercation after a minor automobile accident.

• **June 15, 1978** — Archie G. Dunaway Jr., working in Rhodesia. Killed by guerrillas seeking an African-majority government in the white-ruled, former British colony.

• **March 11, 1973** — Gladys Hopewell, working in Taiwan. No details of her murder were available.

• **January 16, 1972** — Mavis Pate, working in the Gaza area of the Middle East. Shot by Arab guerrillas in ambush as she drove near a refugee camp.

• **July 7, 1971** — Paul E. and Nancy Potter, working in the Dominican Republic. No details of their murders were available.

• **February 10, 1951** — William L. Wallace, working in China, died in communist prison. Many people familiar with Wallace's case believe the physician was tortured to death by the Communist Chinese in power at the time.

• **January 1942** — Rufas F. Gray, working in China. Died in Japanese camp for war prisoners in Baguio, Philippines.

• **December 1880** — John Westrup, working in Mexico. Murdered by band of 20 Indians and Mexicans while traveling from Santa Rosa to Monterey.

• **October 1, 1861** — J. Landrum Holmes, working in China. Murdered while attempting to dissuade invaders from attacking the village of Chu Kia on Shantung Peninsula during the Taiping Rebellion.

An additional 40 Southern Baptist workers are recorded as having been killed in accidents while on the mission field, while countless others have survived violent crimes such as assaults, highway robberies, and armed carjackings.

For 2,000 years, there has been a constant element of danger in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and there's still a need for people willing to answer the Great Commission in hostile areas of the world. All they're asking of us is to support them sacrificially through prayer, giving, and going.

After what our Savior did for us, it's the least we can do for Him.

We are living in challenging times. For some time now I have had the feeling of the ground shifting beneath our feet in ways I do not understand and cannot predict. Southern Baptists have been the driving force in the evangelical movement for the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Mississippi Baptists have been the leaders among Southern Baptists in cooperative mission support. I believe both of these positions are now in question.

At the 2009 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) in October, it was reported that church support for the Cooperative Program (CP) has been in dramatic decline. A decade ago, Mississippi Baptist churches led the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) with a CP support average of nearly 10%. They are projecting CP support for 2010 of just more than five percent. At this rate, in ten years neither the MBC nor the SBC will remain.

If God's people do not give, and God's churches do not cooperate, then our denominational life is over.

This year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions (LMCO)

## GUEST OPINION:



### Our future, at risk

By Carl M. White, pastor  
Highland Church, Meridian

is perhaps the most important in its history. Many are saying it may be a bellwether mark for the future of the funding of all evangelical missionary efforts. Thus, the eyes of the evangelical world are all watching Southern Baptists.

In 2007, after several years of the same goal, LMCO surpassed \$150 million. With the economic downturn in 2008, LMCO dropped by a significant \$9.1 million. Now, for 2009 the goal has been set at an ambitious \$175 million. That represents almost 60% of the entire budget for the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I am not at all optimistic about this goal, and I am alarmed at the attitude I have heard from laypeople — and especially from pastors — about both the CP and LMCO.

Some are saying it is time for a new paradigm for fulfilling the Great Commission, but I think there has been a failure to communicate to a new generation what has been done, what can still be done, and what must be done without reinventing the wheel.

There is a younger generation of believers full of zeal and passion, but short on insight and understanding. They seem to think that every time they discover something new, it is being discovered for the first time.

A few decades ago they discovered worship and think we in the established church have never really known about worship. They discovered mission work, and have gone in record numbers to do hands-on missions, but what is left after

they come home? How is the work carried forward and who will carry it forward? They seem to not understand that the Great Commission cannot be fulfilled with short-term mission projects.

I do not believe that God is finished with Southern Baptists or Mississippi Baptists. I believe that cooperative mission work is the correct paradigm for fulfilling the Great Commission. Certainly, changes are always needed but the basic structures and infrastructure in place is sound and does need to be discarded. If it is, it will take decades for any group of Baptists to reach the current level of work around the world.

I appeal to you to go before your congregation with great passion and enthusiasm and encourage them to support the LMCO as never before. As the eyes of the evangelical world watch, let's demonstrate that the spirit of cooperative missions is very much alive and well.

Our leaders in the MBC and SBC need to know that the Baptists in the pews are still the kind who believe in and will support cooperative missions.

White is a former associate editor of *The Baptist Record*.



# Almost one-quarter of globe now Muslim

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Nearly one in four people worldwide is Muslim, according to a comprehensive demographic study by The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

The estimate is in line with previous data from other sources like the United Nations and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The statistic should remind Southern Baptists that the world is full of people who need to hear the Gospel, said a spokesman for the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention.

According to the study, 1.57 billion, or 23%, of the world's estimated 6.8 billion people are Muslim. This number fits almost in the middle of the high estimate of about 26% and the lower end of 21% popularly used as ranges to describe the global Muslim population.

By comparison, the worldwide Christian population is estimated to be about 2.2 billion, or 1 in 3 people on the planet, according to the CIA Factbook.

In 2010, Pew plans to launch a comprehensive study of the Christian population and to release a more comprehensive report on Muslims. Pew plans to investigate growth rates for both religions.

"More than 60% of the global Muslim population lives in Asia while about 20% is in the Middle East and North Africa. More than 300 million Muslims live in countries where Islam is not the majority religion," Pew said.

Of the total Muslim population, Pew estimated that about 90% are Sunni Muslims and roughly 10% are Shia Muslims living mainly in four countries: Iran, Pakistan, India, and Iraq.

In the largest project of its kind to date, Pew analyzed about 1,500 sources of data from 232 countries and territo-

ries as part of a more extensive report due out next year aimed at helping people understand religion around the world.

Clyde Meador, IMB executive vice president, said the report should motivate believers to reach a world that is lost without Christ. "The thing we need to realize — for instance, the fact that there are 300 million Muslims living in countries that are not majority Muslim — is that here are these 300 million people living in places where likely they are more accessible to hearing the Gospel, and quite possibly they are more open to the Gospel in those settings."

"Where is there a greater accessibility to them than right here in the United States? Our responsibility is to love these people and to share with them truth as we have opportunity," Meador said.

"Overseas, Southern Baptists seek to make the truth of the Gospel available among Muslims wherever they find openness. In some countries where Islam is the majority religion, such as Indonesia, believers actually have the freedom to share the Gospel wisely," Meador said.

"In India, with the third largest Muslim population in the world, there is tremendous freedom to share among the Muslim population," he said, adding that the task grows more difficult in places like Pakistan and the Middle East.

"There are a lot of places where we share the love of Christ through human needs ministries of various kinds, responding to disasters or development-type projects," Meador said. "One response that people have is, 'Why do you do this?' and then we respond about the love of Christ, explaining it as they respond and have increased interest."

I think if at any point we say that there's no use, that they're beyond the Gospel or we shouldn't be trying to reach them, I think we absolutely contradict Scripture if we say something like that."

As believers share the Gospel with Muslims worldwide, one of the most significant challenges adherents to Islam face is cultural resistance to leaving their religion. "When a person from a strong Muslim background — by strong I don't



**PRAYERS TO ALLAH** — Faithful Muslims offer prayers to Allah at least five times daily. Prayer rituals include washing hands, face, and feet, turning toward Mecca, and speaking as much of the prayer in Arabic as possible, even if it is not their native language. (BP photo)

mean necessarily theologically strong or religiously strong, but I mean ethnically strong. When a person from that type of background comes to faith in Christ, he or she loses a lot."

"Of course in a few places they may lose their lives. Most often what they lose are family ties, respect of the community and in some cases their jobs. That's the kind of thing that our folks deal with more than anything else."

"A lot of people our folks work with will come to the point of saying, 'I really believe this is true, but I can't commit to it. I can't become a believer because of what it would cost me,' but of course many people are willing to pay the cost, (and) that is the challenge that's there. That's the greatest challenge."

Meador cited areas of South Asia, North Africa, and some regions of Central Asia as places where significant numbers of Muslims are coming to faith in Christ.

One point Meador wanted to make clear to Southern Baptists is that radical, militant Islam is a small minority of the billions of Muslims worldwide. He urged

sensitivity toward Muslims they may encounter in their daily lives in the United States.

"When you see that man and woman walking through the aisle at Wal-Mart and she's covered to a large extent, and he's got an unusually long beard or whatever, just know that behind that beard... behind that covering is a person just like you," Meador said. "It's a person who has the same joys and hurts. It's a person who has the same needs. It's a person who has the same cares, but it's a person who doesn't know Jesus and that's the difference between you and them."

"The difference to focus on is not the difference in the way they dress and not the difference in their accent and in their English. The thing to focus on is here's somebody who needs to know Jesus, and they're not going to be open to knowing Jesus unless they sense you care about them as a person and that you treat them like a person."

"You treat them like a person because you know they are a person. The fact that they dress differently does not mean they're out to get you."

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

Preparations are underway for the Mississippi Baptist presentation of the musical, *God With Us*, Jan. 22, 2 p.m., at the Mississippi Coliseum, Jackson. The musical will feature choirs from an estimated 105 churches across Mississippi.

### 20 years ago

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board Discipleship Training department receives three awards at the annual meeting of Discipleship Training Directors in Nashville. Awards were given for largest percentage of churches reporting Discipleship Training; largest numerical increase in Baptist Doctrine Study awards; and most children involved in church, associational, and state Bible drills.

### 50 years ago

Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky., retains its accreditation with the American Association of Theological Schools after dismissing 12 professors. The school rescinded the dismissals and accepted the professors' resignations instead.



## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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**YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!**

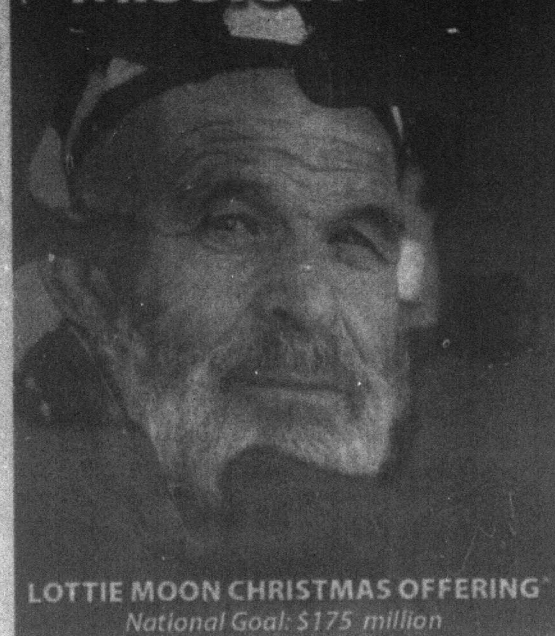
*Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:*

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

*"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)*

*If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.*

## WHO'S WHOSE MISSING? MISSION?





## BIBLIOCIPHER

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004  
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NJUN; IJL RPHY NJU ZN  
PF RPJW YPF IHYPFL  
EPHNYFUFYP UJY?

PFDLFRN YRFAQF:  
NFQFU

Clue: I = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Second Peter One: Two

## WORTHY CAUSES

As we move toward the end of the year, many people give serious thought to making a significant gift to their church, to a mission fund, to a charitable organization, or maybe just a good work that is being done by some non-profit organization. The purpose of the gift may have several points of motivation that cause them to think more seriously about what they are doing. One motivation might be that they just simply care and they want to do something before the year is over. Another motivator might be the fact that the gift can be tax deductible, which for some proves to be a great blessing on April 15 of next year.

That is a good feature in our tax code and a positive thing that helps thousands of organizations including your local church. Another motivation at this particular time of the year when our hearts are tender is to see the great needs that exist and be a part of doing something about alleviating those circumstances. There may be other motivating factors that nudge you to give. Organizations across our country send out letters, flyers, information packets, and even personal phone calls to ask that you consider giving to them. It seems as though at both my home and my office there is an avalanche of these appeals and as I sort through them, every one of them seems to be a worthy cause. It may involve children, the need for food, or health issues. There are multiple mission groups that are trying to raise funds to see that a certain people group or a nation of people get to hear the Gospel. Some of the appeals are related to nature or environmental issues.

It is all good stuff and positive work, and almost invariably, I find myself wanting to do something for each of them. How do you go about thinking through and actually giving to some cause in an end of the year offering? Let me make three suggestions for your consideration that may be helpful in making a wise stewardship decision as you give.

First, I would urge you to allow your decision to be God guided. Your giving ought to be God guided. That means that there should be priority given to the things

that God gives priority to in your giving. That, of course, includes your church. Your local congregation needs your help probably at this time more than any time in your lifetime. Your church needs you to give if you possibly can. Hardly a week passes that I do not hear of someone or talk with someone who has lost his or her job. There are families where both husband and wife have lost their employment. The struggles to keep body and soul together and care for their children and other needs become enormous.

I often say in a stewardship emphasis that God never asks us to give anything that He has not already given to us. If God has never provided anything for you, He does not expect you to provide anything for Him. It is out of our abundance and blessings that God asks, "How will you share?" The base of stewardship begins at tithing and allowing God to take what He has already given to you and give 10% to His Kingdom work. Your church is the channel through which you should be giving that tithe.

If you can do more and especially in a time when others are forced to do less, your help is greatly needed and deeply appreciated. The Scripture says that God instructs us, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse" (Mal. 3:10). It is a God guided giving pattern and that is where you can start. I would also mention that in your giving, following a God guided pattern it will follow the heart of God. When you give to your church and especially in our Baptist life, there are those glorious channels that flow not just to your community congregation but also to the ends of the earth.



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## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

At this season of the year, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions is that great opportunity for you to do a great work at the end of the year. Our churches typically set a goal and then pray, work, and give, asking the Lord to multiply their gifts and increase their efforts so that the world may hear of our Savior. When you join with millions of other Southern Baptists in giving, you are also joining with the very heart of our God who says, "I want you along with me to be a part of reaching a world." It is a God guided moment.

A second guideline I would offer is that your giving should be eternity sided. The things that I have mentioned have more than a here-and-now effect to them. Literally, when you follow God guided giving from a biblical standpoint you are looking at gifts that touch eternity. To believers who give to the Lord and the opportunities that we have as Mississippi Baptists and Southern Baptists, those gifts flow around the globe to the ends of the earth. It is certainly going to take another world to evaluate this world and your giving ought to be seen in the broadest understanding that you would give to touch eternity.

You can give to programs and events that make a difference in this world, our communities, and in our culture, but not all of them provide a vehicle to touch time without end and souls that never die. Give to things that are eternity sided and that have eternal value.

A third end of the year giving guideline might be that it be spiritually decided. That is to say, neither I nor anyone else can tell you what you should do with the resources with which God has blessed you. There is the wonderful privilege that God has given us to come to Him and ask Him what He would have us to do. I know that God is not going to lead you to do something that is outside what He has already revealed in His word, but the way He wants you to go about giving to kingdom work may not be exactly like the fellow sitting down the pew from you. It may not fit the thinking that another person may have. God will guide them as well.

God made us human beings with our own unique shape and look and with the wonderful opportunity to talk to Him and ask Him what He would have us to do. It is a spiritual thing. I would encourage you to ask God what He expects of you. In following His will and blessing others, it needs to be spiritually decided. Through the years, I have been so blessed to see individuals that God has blessed talk to the Father and ask Him what He would have them to do. They in turn reach out and touch people's lives in ways that apart from it being spiritually decided are just simply indescribable.

There are so many worthy causes. Ask God what He would have you to do. Put restraints on your own self-indulgence and seek doing something for Him that is just prompted by His presence and focused on His will. See what God does through you. He above all of the causes is truly worthy, so what you do, do for Him and let His glory be seen.

The author can be contacted at  
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## A gift for Grammy, Grandpa, or any other "Over 50" on your Christmas list

A Farm near Fermoy is 224 pages of short stories, Irish poetry, and some random snippets about growing up in the South and following some of its less traveled roads. This book was written just for seniors...by a senior, and it offers numerous hints for those who might have aspirations of self publishing their own book of memories. A Farm Near Fermoy can be purchased directly from the publisher. For additional information you can call (205)-902-8086, e-mail [fermoygazette@charter.net](mailto:fermoygazette@charter.net), or write Fermoy Press P.O. Box 951 Trussville, AL 35173. We suggest that you allow your special someone to take a spiritually entertaining trip to A Farm Near Fermoy so they can see for themselves. (Total price \$10)



## SUPPORT MISSIONS

Editor:

If every family in our churches would open a savings account similar to a Christmas Club account and then make weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly contributions to it, they would be surprised how much money could be collected for missions offerings.

It usually takes \$100 to open an account, so this would be contributed first. Then if only five dollars a week were placed in that account, this would give the family \$360 at the end of the year. This could then be withdrawn and divided among the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, the Annie Armstrong Offering for North American Missions, the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering, the Baptist Children's Village and the Southern Baptist World Hunger Offering.

If divided evenly, each offering would receive \$72 per family. It would also be possible to withdraw the \$72 at the time of emphasis for each offering instead of waiting until the end of the year (depending on the bank's regulations concerning withdrawals.) In fact, a Christmas Club account could be opened for this specific purpose. Just think what the offerings would look like if every church in the Mississippi Baptist Convention had 10 or

20 families try this formula: 10 families x \$72 per family = \$720. \$720 x 2000 Mississippi Baptist churches = \$1,440,000.

Of course, this is over and above the families who already contribute faithfully to these offerings. Think about it...

Paul Blanchard, missions director  
Winston Association  
Louisville

## HERO LOST

Editor:

Mississippi lost one of its heroes a few weeks ago. Evangelist Don Taylor, age 48, passed away due to injuries suffered in a car accident. Not every one in the state knew Don Taylor, but for the privileged few who did, the grieving still goes on.

Don was a preaching man and — let me tell you — when he stepped behind that sacred desk and opened his Bible, you better catch a deep breath because once he started he let that sermon roll. Fast talking, feet moving, and his eyes on the congregation, Don Taylor could preach.

You see, he knew to whom he belonged, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it was his joy in life to tell you about Him. He spoke of love, sin, redemption, reconciliation, heaven, and hell. You could see in your mind's eye that of which he spoke.

Don had several loves in his life: Leisa, his wife of 32 years, his 2 sons and his daughter, and let's not forget those grandkids — but first and foremost was Jesus.

In August while on his way home from a revival meeting in Rankin County, Don fell asleep behind the wheel of his truck. Gone in a second, less than a mile from home. We don't know why, and so we grieve. We miss our friend, our brother, our teacher, our preacher, our husband, father, and grandpaw. Not every one knew Don Taylor, but they should have.

Jennie Wyatt  
Morton

## 65 YEARS LATER

Editor:

In 1944, the year I was born, my daddy surrendered to the ministry. He sold his small farm and moved to Newton with a wife and four children for him to go to college. We moved into a house on what was known then as Preacher Hill on the Clark Memorial College campus.

At Christmas time, some caring folks from a Baptist church somewhere in Mississippi provided Christmas gifts for the children of the families on Preacher Hill. I can't remember any gifts that I got, except for one. A little red rocker was under the Christmas tree for me on Christmas morning.

I still have that little red rocking chair in my home. Before my mother died in 2004, I asked her what church in Mississippi did this loving deed for us and she couldn't remember. When I look at the rocker, I just want to thank someone for being so generous to someone they didn't even know. Since I didn't know what church to thank, I decided to write this letter of thanks to all Mississippi



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Baptists for what some might think a small act of kindness — but to me it becomes larger every time I look at the chair.

I hope that this letter will serve as my thank you note and that it will inspire churches and/or individuals to make a gift to someone during this season, even someone they do not even know.

Jane Roane Hilliard  
Tullahoma, Tn.

## SUPPORT MISSIONS

Editor:

Your front-page story in last week's Record about the effect a shortage of funds is having on foreign missions reminded me of a similar problem back during the Great Depression. My late father-in-law, Jack Jimerson Cowser of Goodman, was appointed in 1921 to serve in Brazil. While on furlough in 1932, the Foreign Mission Board informed him that they would not have sufficient funds to pay his and other missionaries' travel expenses back to the field.

Fortunately, the Oklahoma brother of one of Jack's fellow missionaries came forward and paid the family's way back to Rio de Janeiro, and Jack was able to serve more than forty years and retire after the age of seventy.

Of course, Southern Baptists are supporting many more foreign missionaries nowadays and the rate of currency exchange is much less favorable than it was in the Thirties. Still, I wonder if they wouldn't be able to support

missionary families like the one mentioned in the Record if their priorities were similar to the ones those poor Baptists back in the Thirties had. Shouldn't the support of those doing missions full time and over the long haul be the first concern of Baptist churches, even if it means backing off from some less effective very short-term mission projects — especially when most of the persons involved cannot speak the language and have no special skills to contribute?

James O. Morse  
Starkville

## INFORMATION, PLEASE

Editor:

Some of us at First Church of Clinton are interested in the history and significance of the Nelson House.

D.M. Nelson was the president of Mississippi College (MC) from 1932-57, and his ministry had a profound effect on many students there. In light of its significance in the lives of many MC alums and in the community, we would like to see the house restored to its condition at the time of Nelson's tenure.

At present, the house is used for Sunday School classes, English as a Second Language classes, Chinese student fellowships, and by ladies from the town at large for bridal showers. Anything that can be done to enhance the beauty and serviceability of the house would benefit all of these groups, as well as the church as a whole.

We would appreciate any memoirs, anecdotes, or copies of photographs from former students, and especially from members of the Nelson family. Please send them to Nelson House, 411 Concord Dr., Clinton, MS 39056.

Sylvia McCracken  
Clinton

**MINISTER OF MUSIC/SENIOR ADULTS:** Blended worship, 40 to 50 voice choir. Orchestra. Minimum five years experience and ability to direct major pageants required. Email resume to office@fbco-ley.com or mail to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 307, Foley, AL 36536.

**CHILDREN'S MINISTER/DIRECTOR** — Beech Haven Baptist Church in Athens, GA is seeking a full-time Minister/Director of Children with minimum three years leadership experience in children's programs. Submit resume electronically to bhbcchildren@gmail.com or mail to Beech Haven Baptist Church, Attn: Children's Minister Search Committee, 2390 W. Broad St., Athens GA, 30606. View full job description at [www.BeechHaven.org/positions](http://www.BeechHaven.org/positions)

**BEECH HAVEN BAPTIST CHURCH,** Athens GA, is seeking full-time Youth Minister with minimum three years experience in youth leadership. Seminary graduate preferred. Submit resume electronically to Dr. Trey Hood (th@uga.edu). Full consideration given to applications received before December 21, 2009. View job description at [www.BeechHaven.org/positions](http://www.BeechHaven.org/positions)

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**PRICE HARRIS—MUSIC EVANGELISM** Open dates for January—May, 2010 January 3, 10, 31; February 14—March 21, 28; April 25/May 23, 30 Phea2@aol.com/ 318-347-3370 Committed to the Church

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## MISSISSIPPI POSITIONS

**YOUTH MINISTER — NEW BETHEL** Baptist in Philadelphia, MS is receiving applications for the part time position of YOUTH MINISTER. Applications will be received through 1/15/2010. The application and job description is available at [newbethelmsbc.com](http://newbethelmsbc.com) or by contacting the church 601-656-2301.

**FBC VERONA IS CURRENTLY LOOKING** for a part/time Minister of Music and a Minister of students. Email resume to: [fbcverona@bellsouth.net](mailto:fbcverona@bellsouth.net) or call: 662-566-8380.

**OAK HILL CHURCH OF MERIDIAN** is looking for a pianist. Contact 601-482-5583.

**HEADMASTER — SMALL CHRISTIAN** School. Send Resume to: P.O. Box 4097, Meridian, MS. 39304

**SMITHVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH IS** seeking a bi-vocational Student Minister. Please submit your resume and DVD to: Smithville Baptist Church P. O. Box 52 Smithville, MS 38870

**CENTER RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH** located in the Carmichael community in Clarke County, MS is currently seeking a full time or bi-vocational pastor. Resumes may be sent to: Center Ridge Baptist Church, c/o Beverly Lindsey 8087 CR 630, Shubuta, MS 39360, or email [bevely1@dishmail.net](mailto:bevely1@dishmail.net)

**BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING** a P/T Music/Youth Minister. Send resumes to Bethel Baptist Church, c/o Bill Finch, 500 S. Main, Water Valley, Ms., 38965-3327 or Email [bfinch-es@gmail.com](mailto:bfinch-es@gmail.com). Tel. 662-473-3667.

**PART-TIME SECRETARY FOR SMALL** church with financial secretary duties - 15 - 20 hours per week. Knowledge of Quickbook is requested. Send resume to Pineview Baptist Church, 1288 Clinton-Raymond Rd, Clinton, MS 39056 - Attn Personnel Committee or email it to [Pineviewbc@bellsouth.net](mailto:Pineviewbc@bellsouth.net)

**CORNERSTONE CHURCH NON-TRADITIONAL NEW CHURCH** start in Lamar county seeking bi-vocational teaching pastor to serve as part of two person staff. MUST have passion to lead and reach the "hard to reach." Interim position available. Send resume to Pastor Search Team, 55 Beach Rd., Purvis, MS 39475, or email [BAWilliamson@live.com](mailto:BAWilliamson@live.com)

**GRACEWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH,** Southaven MS is seeking a full time Minister to Students. Gracewood is looking for someone with some experience working with youth and/or children, and some seminary. Send your resume to Gracewood Baptist Church, Search Committee, 8551 Getwell Road, Southaven, MS 38672.

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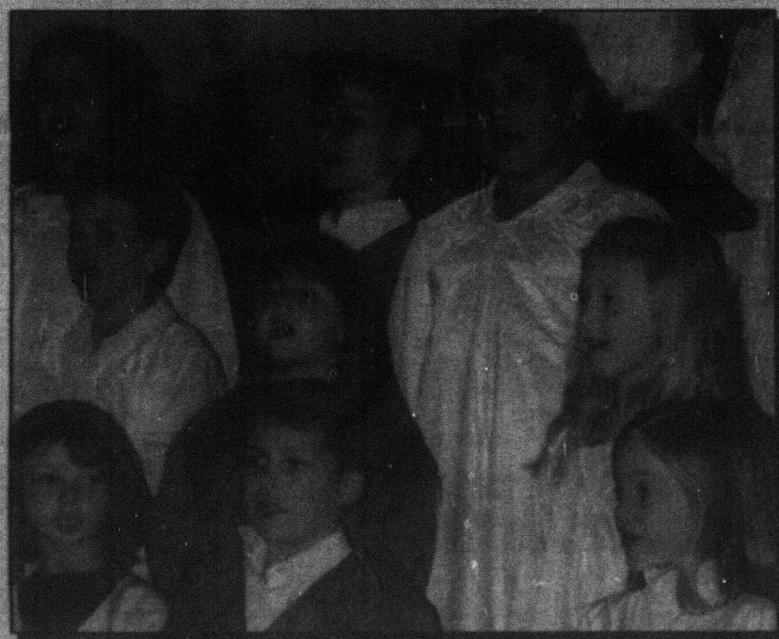
## JUST FOR THE RECORD



4. Academy Church, Tippah



5. New Zion Church, Braxton



6. Calvary Church, Columbia



7. Ballew and Roberts



1. Lakeside Church, Hattiesburg, hosted a fundraiser turkey shoot Nov. 14, with over \$1,000 raised for the church's building fund.
2. Valley Park Church, Valley Park, will present the musical drama, It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year, Dec. 20, 6 p.m.
3. Hathorn Church, Covington-Jefferson Davis Association, is presenting The Dawn of Redeeming Grace Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m., followed by refreshments and fellowship.
4. Academy Church, Tippah, held a baby dedication Nov. 29. Shown are the parents, their children, and pastor Earl Barron.
5. New Zion Church, Braxton, had a themed supper in September with the theme, Life is a Circus. Shown are some of the members who dressed the part.
6. Calvary Church, Columbia, presented their Christmas musical Dec. 6. Shown are the participants.
7. Bassfield Church, Jefferson Davis County, recognized Ethel Ballew for 60 years of service in the children's ministry. Shown is pastor Ken Roberts presenting a plaque to Ballew.
8. Gunter Road Church, Florence, ordained Tim Temple to the ministry Dec. 6. Shown are Irving Forrester, Temple, and pastor Gene Jordan.
9. Longview Point Church, Hernando, recently broke ground on a new children's and preschool ministry building. Shown are Tommy McDonald, Rhodes Thompson, Amye Kelly, pastor Wade Humphries, Lou Ann Keith, Joan Hollis, Calista Patterson, Ginny Swindoll, and Piet Zee.
10. Mt. Vernon Church, Eupora, honored deacon Russell Hood for his many years of service Dec. 6. Shown are pastor Dale Strickland and Hood.
11. The children of Meadowview Church, Starkville, presented the Christmas play The First Day of Christmas Dec. 6.



8. Temple ordination, Gunter Road Church, Florence



9. Longview Point Church, Hernando



10. Strickland and Hood



11. Meadowview Church, Starkville



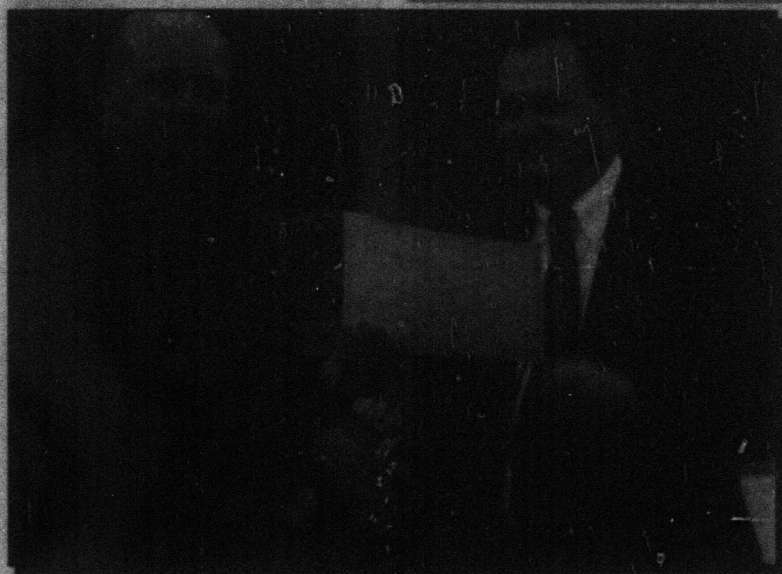
## JUST FOR THE RECORD

12. Linwood Church, Union, ordained Jay Brown as deacon Aug. 23. Shown are Brown and pastor Mike Skinner.

13. First Church, Terry, ordained Boyd Germany to the ministry Nov. 29. Germany is serving as music minister at Shady Grove Church, Hazlehurst. Shown are Jason Lee, Germany, Emily Germany, and pastor John Pace.

14. The musical trio Shiloh, based out of Big Creek, has expanded to a six member band and has released a CD entitled, *Until Then*. To contact the group or to inquire about the CD, call (662) 628-4841 or 623-5949, or visit [www.myspace.com/shilohgospelband](http://www.myspace.com/shilohgospelband).

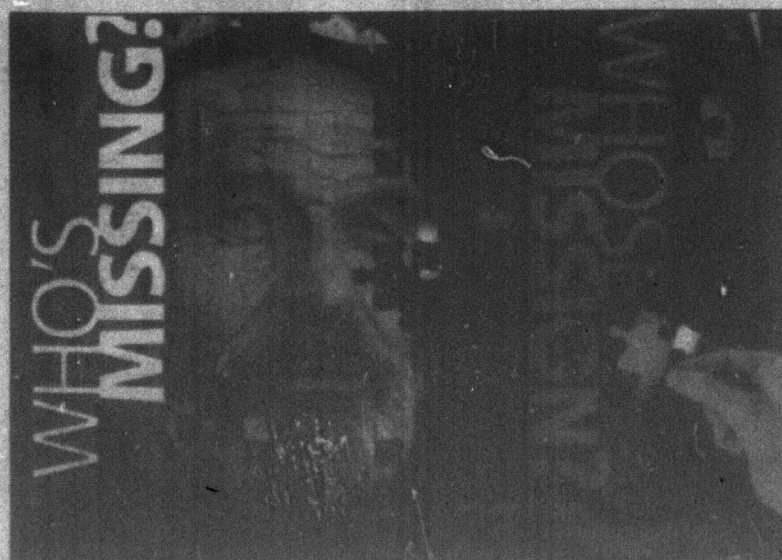
Visit us online at [www.mbcab.org](http://www.mbcab.org) to learn more about Mississippi Baptist opportunities.



12. Brown and Skinner



13. Germany ordination, First Church, Terry



## REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. David Leonard Bagley, oldest member of Highland Church, Crystal Springs, is shown during the church's recent homecoming with his first pastor, D.J. Benson, and his current pastor, David Patterson.

2. Several churches of southeast Lafayette County combined for revival services Oct. 4-7 led by Dan Robertson, AMD, Golden Triangle Association. Churches involved included New Elbethel, Tula, and Paris.

3. Grace Memorial Church, Gulfport: 105th anniversary, Jan. 24, 2010: Services, 10:30 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds.



1. Benson, Bagley, and Patterson

## OBITUARY

Funeral services for J. B. Costilow were December 8 at Liberty Church in Newton County with David Jay and James Read officiating. Costilow was born in Grenada September 14, 1922. He accepted Christ at age 26 and was called to the ministry a year later. After earning degrees from Clarke College and Mississippi College, he received his Master of Theology degree in 1956 from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He was ordained into the gospel ministry by First Church in Grenada on February 25, 1951. After seminary, Costilow assumed duties as director of the Baptist Student Union at Clarke College and remained in that position for 34 years. He also pastored at Smyra Church in Indiana,

Goodwater Church in Meehan Junction, Bolton Church, and served as interim pastor in Newton and Decatur. He spoke in many churches to promote Clarke College and BSU work in the state. He was called as interim pastor at Liberty Church in Newton County and remained as their pastor for 35 years. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Virginia Beck Costilow of Newton; one son, Larry Costilow (Becky) of Meridian; two daughters, Gail Birdsong (Bill) of Edwards, and Sherry Alford (Mack) of Philadelphia; three grandchildren, Dawn Crosby (Thad) of Clinton, Jason Alford (Rhonda) of Vicksburg, and Jennifer Walker (Glenn) of Macon, Georgia; and 5 great grandchildren.

## COLLEGE NEWS

1. James E. Messer will lead a Bible and Evangelism Conference February 21-25 on the Hattiesburg campus of William Carey University. Speakers will be Ergun Caner, Emir Caner, Herb Reavis, Don Wilton, Junior Hill, and Johnny Hunt. The evening services will be held at 6:30 p.m. in Smith Auditorium of Thomas Fine Arts Center. Chapel services will be held Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9:25 a.m. Student luncheon services will be held Tuesday and Thursday in the Student Conference Center of Wilkes Hall at 11:30 a.m. Children's Services will be held in the Student Conference Center Sunday through Thursday at 6:00 p.m. and will be led by "Airhead" Perry Robbins. Music personalities are Phil Willis and Sons of the Father.

2. The Winters School of Music at William Carey University will present a holiday performance for the public Dec. 17 at 7:30 p.m. in Smith Auditorium. The WCU Ensemble Christmas Concert will perform

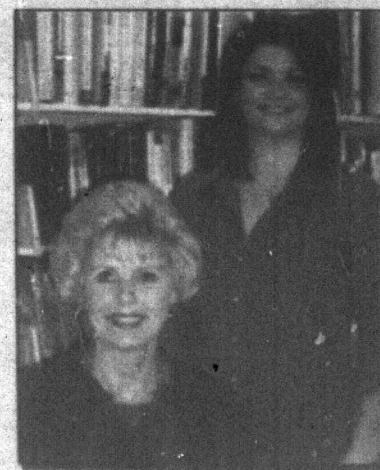
Christmas favorites. The concert features the Piano Ensemble, the contemporary singing group Carpenter's Wood, the hand bells ensemble Carey Carillon, and the WCU Instrumental Ensemble. The public is invited to the concert admission free. For more information call (601) 318-6175.

3. Michael Mann will be the keynote speaker at Mississippi College's winter commencement Dec. 18, 7 p.m., A.E. Woods Coliseum. The School of Nursing commencement will be at 1:30 p.m., Provine Chapel.

4. Kay Matkins, associate professor of education, and Sarah Hall, biology honors student, both of Ingomar, have been chosen HEADWAE faculty and student honorees at Blue Mountain College. HEADWAE - Higher Education Appreciation Day/Working for Academic Excellence - was established by the Mississippi Legislature in 1988 and recognizes students and faculty members from each of the state's 36

public and private colleges and universities. Matkins and Hall will be honored by the state Legislature when it convenes in 2010.

5. Mississippi College professor Nancy Anderson has written a money management book, *Tough Talk for Tough Times: Real Conversations for Real People About Money and Finance*. The author can be reached at [nanderson@mc.edu](mailto:nanderson@mc.edu) or (601) 925-7094.



4. Matkins and Hall



# Canary Islands strong lure for Southern Baptist couple

FUERTEVENTURA, Canary Islands (BP) — Passersby hardly notice the mosque on this active street corner on the Spanish island of Fuerteventura. No crescent moons, no Arabic writing, no minarets piercing the sky — only dust and exhaust-stained apartments.

Looks can be deceiving. Behind a black metal door, stairs descend to what appears to be an old three-bedroom apartment. At the foot of the stairs stands a floor-to-ceiling shoe shelf. To the left is a trough with two water spigots where followers wash their feet in preparation for Friday prayers.

The air is still and hot at the mosque in Fuerteventura, one of the Canary Islands. Arriving worshippers stir a small breeze, wafting the pungent smell of shoes and body odor. No one seems to notice. Barefoot, each man crosses the holy threshold lined with red prayer rugs.

"Salaam alaykoom" (peace be with you), each says as he enters. Those already there echo the greeting in return.

This is the first time Southern Baptist missionary Pepe Lopez (name changed for security reasons) has attended a service at this location. Omar, one of Pepe's Muslim students, invited him. As it turns out, many of the students Pepe

teaches Spanish to every week go to the mosque here.

Omar (name changed for security reasons) has not missed a Spanish lesson since classes started more than a year ago. Pepe began teaching the free class after a new law required anyone seeking permanent residency be able to read and write basic Spanish. This made it impossible for North Africans like Omar to delay learning the native language.

Pepe believes he has garnered respect from his class because he does not force his beliefs on them. This alone gives him kudos in the eyes of his students — Omar in particular. "He knows I'm a Christian... he feels like he is trying to reach me. He doesn't know I'm trying to reach him," Pepe says with a boisterous laugh.

There is more to Omar and Pepe's friendship than who's reaching whom. Omar has taken to Pepe because he's proven himself truthful and trustworthy, important traits to Omar. "Although in public Omar speaks highly of his parents (and) his faith, in private he has shared how his father, particularly, has been rough on him," Pepe says. "He is a very lonely person... and has few friends" since he finds it difficult to trust people.

In order to build relationships with his students outside the classroom, Pepe says he first shows them he is a loving friend. "That is practically an unknown in their culture or faith," he says. "Love is a missing ingredient of their life. Just to love as a brother... goes beyond anything they have known."

As the friendships blossom, Pepe finds opportunities to share the true reason he loves. "Jesus has loved me unconditionally," he says. "He will always forgive me when I ask Him to, even when He doesn't like what I do. That, too, is an unknown to them."

In contrast, Omar's faith requires him to make up for his faults. If he misses a prayer he must do something to get back in Allah's good graces. "To know that God just forgives us when we repent and ask for forgiveness is an eye-opener," Pepe says of Christianity. "Where for them it is always 'perhaps' Allah will hear my prayer, 'perhaps' Allah will remember my good works, 'perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.'"

There is no "perhaps" with Pepe's God. "I can speak with deep conviction of an assurance of forgiveness, of constant, steadfast love and conviction that at death I will dwell with God. That just blows [Omar's] mind."



**FERTILE FIELD** — Southern Baptist missionary Pepe Lopez (name changed for security reasons) talks with a man at the entrance of a small mosque for worship in Fuerteventura, Canary Islands. With many Muslim refugees and people looking for work coming to the Spanish islands, Lopez spends much of his time reaching out to these new arrivals. (BP photo)

Omar has shared his admiration of Pepe's strong faith and how he wants to be sure of his own life after death. "When I start seeing a wishful, wistful look," he says, "I know that I am getting through."

That look makes it all worth it for Pepe. It's all the payment he needs in return for teaching Spanish to young

Muslims and cultivating relationships with them.

Pepe and his wife Shari also know why their children's camps are successful. It's not because of them, but because of Jesus. They hope their relationships with the children will develop into friendships with parents so they can share what really sets their camps apart from the others.



"If the power bill goes up,  
I'll not turn my heat on this winter."

— Eunice Bryant

THEY CALL IT DIGNITY. WE CALL IT A MISSION.

## Mission:Dignity

[ Without your help, they may go without the basic necessities. ]

Eunice Bryant is an 89-year-old pastor's widow whose husband served small, rural churches for more than 40 years.

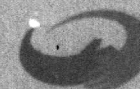
Now, all she has is a small Social Security check and some hard choices. Eunice's thank-you note for her Mission:Dignity assistance said it all: "My cabinets were bare and I have filled them with food."

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# THE VILLAGE VIEW



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A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a Gift of Honor and Memory. Many stories and individuals are featured in this section through the kindness of our donors. Your help in this way is greatly appreciated and will help us continue to provide a safe and loving home for the children in our care.

NOVEMBER 1 - 30, 2009

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Mrs. Virgie Farmer  
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Mrs. Elizabeth Curlee  
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## Merry Christmas

Remembering that Jesus is the Greatest Gift!  
Merry Christmas to you and yours from The Baptist Children's Village children, staff and trustees.



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## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

### Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Luke 1:67-79

By Barbara Brown

Composer Franz Joseph Haydn was present at the Vienna Music Hall, where his musical composition *The Creation* was being performed. He was weak with age and confined to a wheelchair. When the passage "And there was light!" was reached, the audience was so caught up with emotion that they could no longer restrain their enthusiasm. They rose to their feet and spontaneously applauded. Haydn struggled to stand and motioned for silence. With his hand pointed toward heaven, he said, "No, no, not from me, but from the Lord comes all!" Having given the glory and praise to the Creator, he fell back into his chair exhausted.

Zechariah's response to the birth of his son was much like this. Surely he was so grateful

for his boy, but his words gave heartfelt applause to the Lord for His work and His plans.

#### Zechariah's Benedictus

When Zechariah regained his ability to speak, the first words that proceeded from his mouth were words of praise and honor for the Lord God Almighty. His choice to respond to God in such a way for the great thing He had done in his life caused others to be filled with awe. As the news spread about the new baby named John, the people wondered, "What will this special child grow up to be and do?" It was apparent to those observing the circumcision ceremony of this eight-day old baby that the Lord had something great in mind. (Luke 1:64-66) (Jesus even said of John that no greater person had been born of woman.) Zechariah's response to all of



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this attention was to direct it heavenward. He took no pride or credit for himself or for his new son. He worshipped the Lord and then offered his Benedictus, his Spirit-inspired hymn of praise to the Lord. He praised God for keep-

ing His promises, for fulfilling His covenant with His people, and for the gift of redemption through His Son.

#### Promises Kept (v.68-71)

Zechariah launches into his song with the announcement that the Lord who promised redemption for His people was keeping His promise by raising up a "horn of salvation." (v. 69) The horn is a picture of might and strength for the horn of an ox was often used for protection and for fighting enemies. It is also the picture of a king who saves his people. (1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 132:17) This "horn" would come from the line of David and, with great mercy, provide salvation for His people from their enemies.

#### Prophecy Fulfilled (v.72-75)

The birth of John the Baptist,

and ultimately the birth of Jesus, also meant that God was once again working to redeem the covenant He had made with Abraham two thousand years before. Zechariah wants the people to know that something really big is happening here—bigger than the birth of his son—God is fulfilling His Word to His people. He will rescue them from their enemies and "enable them to serve Him without fear." Jesus would be the fulfillment of that covenant.

#### Redemption Provided (v. 76-79)

Zechariah concludes his hymn by answering the question asked by the awed observers in the beginning: "What is this child going to be?" His son would be the prophet who would precede the awaited Messiah. His son would preach repentance, forgiveness of sins, and salvation. His son would proclaim from every highway and byway, "Prepare the way! Here comes the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" His son would only be great as he preached the greatness of another—the Mighty Son of a

living God Who would not only save His people but provide them with the mercy and light needed to love and serve Him.

Zechariah's song reminds us that God still keeps His promises. He redeems His people, delivers them from the darkness of sin, and fills us with a blessed hope of a future with Him. Now that is worth shouting from the mountaintops!

*Go, tell it on the mountain  
Over the hills and everywhere.  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born!*

*They found a lovely manger  
Where the humble Christ was born,  
And God sent out salvation  
On that blessed Christmas morn.*

*He brought with Him forgiveness,  
He lived to show us the way.  
He came to redeem all creation  
And to wash all our sins away.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain  
Over the hills and everywhere.  
Go, tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born!*

*Brown is children's minister,  
Colonial Heights Church, Ridgeland.*

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Why Did Jesus Come?

Luke 2:8-15, 25-35

By Malcolm Woody

I imagine it is a crystal clear night where the sky is alive with the light of distant celestial entities. It could just as well have been cloudy, too. We don't know what the weather was like that night, we only know that in the nearby fields of Bethlehem shepherds are abiding watching their flocks. It is what shepherds do. They abide.

Many times they are referred to as lowly shepherds, historically, the moniker applies. They aren't allowed to go past the Court of the Gentiles at the temple. They are dirty and considered unclean. Their testimonies are considered untrustworthy and politically they have no voice. So they abide with their flocks protecting and guiding them, for without shepherds the

sheep stand zero chance of survival. Sheep are very likely the most needy of all domesticated animals.

Why on earth then is God about to proclaim the birth of the long awaited Messiah to these lowly shepherds? Would the Pharisees argue against it finding some technical rule broken? Would the Sadducees not believe it? Would the Essenes keep it for themselves? Would the Zealots rally the troops to go to war with Rome?

The fields are less than two miles east of Bethlehem. (They are still called the Shepherd's Fields to this day). These fields were once owned by Boaz and they shadow the valley gleaned by Ruth and Naomi. Most scholars place the night the Savior came in the winter or late fall, but no one knows



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for sure. Even the sheep aren't choice sheep. Evidence describes them as sacrificial sheep. They will not donate wool for clothing or milk for nourishment. Instead, they will be slain for remission of sins. These sheep are outside during the

winter and the shepherds who watch them would be low even among shepherds. They are watching over sacrifices.

On this night the night sky is interrupted by an angelic being presenting himself to the shepherds. They are terrified. Many dive into the caves that dot the landscape and others fall prostrate to the ground fearing for their lives.

The voice of the angel erupts across the field, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby

wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. (Lk 2:10b-12 NASB)"

What happens next is unspeakable splendor as the entire night sky is illuminated with a heavenly multitude and the veil of the dark night is peeled back in pure unadulterated praise:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Lk 2:14 KJV)"

Then just as suddenly as it had all began it was over. The sky goes back to night and the shepherds are alone again in the fields. Now what? What will the shepherds do with the news they have been given? What they do is telling.

First, they go. It is the first step of the Great Commission and also the first step for the lowly shepherds. They don't wait long and hurriedly they go on their way. God selected the right people. There was no long debate about theology, the "right" way to go, or what to do when they got where they are going. They don't allow unanswered questions to hinder them. They simply go.

Second, the shepherds see. Luke offers no details on what they do when they find the baby Jesus, but what they do next tells us that the experience exceeded expectation. Third, they take what they have seen and share with others. These social outcasts go about the land telling upstanding citizens what they have heard and seen, and people are amazed. Fourth and finally, the shepherds return to their fields praising and worshipping God.

Consider the shepherds' actions this Christmas season. Listen to where God is guiding you, then be prepared to go. As you go, be ever mindful of what you see and experience in His presence. Share this experience and why He came with others. Then at the close of each day, be sure to go home praising and worshipping a living God who on a dark night came to be with us and pave a way back to the Father.

*Woody is a member of  
Broadmoor Church, Madison.*

**Sunday School Lesson commentaries in the Baptist Record for January 3 will not be available.**

# Merry Christmas

The staff of The Baptist Record wishes you and your family a joyous celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and a Happy New Year. We are grateful for your support for this ministry of information, and look forward to being a part of your 2010 as we work together to help bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus.



## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

### Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Philippians 2:5-11

By Barbara Brown

*Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!  
Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled."  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies.  
With angelic hosts proclaim:  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."*

In his peace-filled hymn written over 250 years ago, Charles Wesley guides our hearts and minds to focus on all that was wrapped up in the manger on that night long ago. For swaddled in cloths, lying in a feed box filled with fodder that day, laid so much more than a baby who would grow to be a man - here laid the God Incarnate Himself. He was come to bring hope, fulfill promises, and complete The Plan designed in heaven. He was destined to change the world. The angels knew and

so they sang, "Glory to the newborn King!"

The apostle Paul also knew that there was so much more to Jesus than what could be seen and comprehended by man. He knew and so he challenged the Philippians in his day to consider not only the birth of Jesus, but also His life and death. Then live in a way that glorifies Him.

In Philippians 2:5-11, Paul gave one very practical pointer-for living this kind of life: Be like Jesus. Period. Just study Him and follow His example. And, just in case we need a reminder of what Jesus was like, Paul says it clearly:

**He gave up His right to high position (v. 6)**

Lots of people think of Jesus as a poor, wise man, one who traveled speaking with power about things that mattered. And they esteem Him.



Brown

But Paul reminds us that if that is all we think of Jesus, we will never truly understand His greatness. Though it may defy our own human logic, we must realize that Jesus gave up His position in heaven with God Almighty as

He traveled to earth by way of a corn crib.

**He made Himself nothing (v. 7)**

As He lived on earth, Jesus did not fall back on His status or His "rights." He made himself nothing. The KJV says that, "He made himself of no reputation." Though He was wholly God, divine in nature, He demanded nothing while He gave all.

**He took on the nature of a servant (v. 7)**

The word servant in this verse goes far beyond the idea of one who works for another; it is the word for bondsman - one who chooses to permanently attach himself to his master for the rest of his life. Jesus chose to empty Himself and take on the role of a slave

so that through Him, people might be served forgiveness and reconciliation to the Father.

**He humbled himself and became obedient to death (v. 8)**

Humble service was not the end of Jesus' humility. He followed through with the plan of His Father and suffered a cruel death for our sins.

Because of His humble and complete obedience to the plan designed in heaven, Jesus is exalted by God Himself to the highest place so that there will be no confusion about His position. Paul paints a picture of the day when every knee in heaven and on earth will bow and every mouth will declare that Jesus is Lord. (v. 9-11) Until that day, we must clothe ourselves with the humility, servant heart, and obedience of Jesus Christ. We must grow in our desire to do whatever it takes to make Him known so that others will also one day join the ranks of those who are reconciled by a second birth.

One great day there will be

no need for a manger with shepherds and sheep and straw and stars. One great day there will be true peace on earth and Jesus, our Emmanuel, the King of Kings in all of His glory will reign forever and ever. And our voices will join the heralding angels as we proclaim in unison, "Glory!"

*Christ by highest heav'n adored,  
Christ the everlasting Lord!  
Late in time behold Him come  
Offspring of a Virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see  
Hail the incarnate Deity.  
Pleased as man with man to dwell  
Jesus, our Emmanuel*

*Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by  
Born that man no more may die.  
Born to raise the sons of earth  
Born to give them second birth  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"*

Brown is children's minister, Colonial Heights Church, Ridgeland.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Is God Still Working in the World?

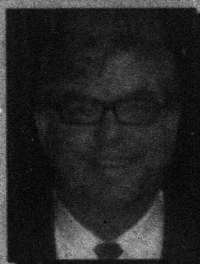
Mark 4:14-32

By Malcolm Woody

Consider the farmer broadcasting his seed by hand. On the slopes of Galilee he gets maximum seed on the ground with minimal discretion where the seed lands. Seeds spill over onto rocky places, roadways, and paths. Some seeds settle amid thorns and weeds, while other seeds find choice soil. There are a great many challenges facing the seeds. How deep will the root system be? How harsh the persecution from surrounding weeds? How troubling the weather? Even splendid health and marked growth doesn't guarantee a fruitful plant. Regardless of all challenges, the seed is broadcast each season and one seed finding good ground produces up to 100 seeds to sow next year.

Consider a dark room. The room is full of numerous

belongings, but the owner can't see them. Then one lamp is lit and from a tiny flame the room becomes awash in light displaying all that is in it. But when he covers the lamp with a bowl, though the lamp is still burning, darkness obscures the room. The man places the lamp on a stand and scrutinizes it intensely. He passes his hand by the flame, watching the shadow dance upon the door. Beyond the door is the world, and he begins to excitedly speculate what it would be like to take his light out into that darkness. He is astonished at the potential. He ponders what would happen if the flame was larger. He once heard Jesus talk about the lamp and stand. Jesus said, "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you - and even



Woody

more. (Mk 4:24b NIV)" The man scratches his head as he thinks about the words "even more."

Consider the soil of the field. By all appearances there is nothing happening in the field. Days pass and the farmer looks in vain for some sign of what he planted. Then one day a small green shoot sprouts from the buried seed. Slowly through the days of summer the shoot grows to a stalk and the stalk produces grain. The farmer strains the harvested grain through his hands contemplating the desolate soil of planting season. He nods his head realizing that appearances can be deceiving.

Consider the birds of the air flying daily to find food and secure shelter. The terrain around Israel is mostly without trees, and the summer heat beats down on the birds as they do their bidding. The birds pass over the tiny yellowish brown mustard seed.

It's not much of a meal. In due time, the birds discover the end result of what they have overlooked and find rest and shade in the massive plant. They find refuge.

Experts in human communication are amazed as they read the parables of Jesus. His simple little stories that illuminate His message, rife with details of daily life, have transcended the ages. What's more, they still apply. They remain relevant. Everyone likes a good story and these anecdotes stick with you. You can remember almost every word and detail. As you unpack these parables you realize the depth of them, how they reach deep inside the understanding of God like a perfectly spun tapestry held together by His truth and fashioned in His love.

Jesus describes the Kingdom of God in these parables. I find that even today the seed is broadcast and the terrain is still just as motley. The Light of the world still shines brightly for all to see and most assuredly

is taken out of the dark room into the dark world. I still struggle looking at the barren fields, hoping God is at work, and in time seeing what He is doing that was originally beyond my sight. I discover that the tiniest bit of faith or one person with a mountain of faith, often overlooked, often scoffed at, grows within the Kingdom to great measures of service, grace, and love. He is still at work today and everyday.

The question should not be, Is God still at work in the world? It should be, Are we? Have you put a bowl over the Light? Decided there is nothing going on out there in the field? Convinced yourself the smallest measure of grace has no chance to change this fallen world? Put up your broadcaster? Jesus would tell you not to count Him out, but to come join Him out in this world... broadcasting... planting... shining... witnessing... giving refuge.

Woody is a member of Broadmoor Church, Madison.

## Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.



Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.



# Iran churches flowering despite threats of oppression

TEHRAN, Iran (BP) — How can people groups in Iran be reached if strangers cannot live among them? Two ways to do that are to train Iranian Christians in the country to share the Gospel, and connect with Iranians who live outside the country.

Gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions (LMCO) and through the Cooperative Program (CP) enable Southern Baptist workers to train house church leaders when the leaders are able to travel outside the country to meet them.

The workers also reach out to Iranians who live elsewhere, some as refugees. "Volunteer teams are needed to train refugees in business skills as well as in discipleship as they embark on new lives in other countries and in Christ," says Nick (name changed for security reasons), a Southern Baptist from Florida who works with the people of Iran.

"More workers also are needed who feel a call to reach the people of Iran and are ready to embrace that challenge despite difficulties," adds fellow Southern Baptist worker Daniel (name changed for security reasons) from Kentucky. "We need creative, long-term idea people who think outside the box," he says.

"We do believe that God calls people intentionally, but we [also] believe that people can shut down that calling based on the biases that we hold," Daniel says.

"In many ways, Iran is a pocket of lostness to the Gospel because of restrictions and dangers to Christians," Daniel says. "Many of the people, however, are more aware of and open to Christianity than some might think."

## Growing in small groups

An Iranian who had accepted Christ while living outside the country returned nine years later to see his family and to share the Gospel with them, Nick recounts. The Iranian Christian told his brother of his plans to bring them electronic copies of the Bible so they would be less conspicuous in an Islamic republic where distributing Bibles is illegal and can lead to arrest.

The brother in Iran told him that if God is as strong and faithful as his brother had been telling him, then he should give the family the Book itself. Moved by the message of the Gospel and his brother's bold faith to share it, the brother in Iran has since become a believer in Christ.

"The church is growing in Iran, especially compared to its neighbors," Daniel says. Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the Persian Gulf and parts of the former Soviet Union, border Iran.

The church in Iran is growing quietly in small groups, often among friends and family, because Christian activity — especially evangelistic outreach — cannot be conducted in public. For it to be practiced at all can bring imprisonment, possibly death, to former Muslims discovered to be house church leaders.



**BREAKING THROUGH** — Sunlight illuminates the bazaar (marketplace) in Tabriz, Iran. The maze of corridors contains vendor-style shops featuring carpet designs distinctive to the Azeri, who have their own language, and culture, but need the light of Jesus Christ in their lives. (BP photo)

"Christian leaders in Iran are being beaten and broken, much like in the New Testament, for sharing the Good News," Daniel says.

One wife of a house church leader asked Southern Baptist worker Martha (name changed for security reasons) from Kentucky to pray that the church members be protected from discovery and harm.

"If someone has to be arrested," Martha recounts, "she prayed that they [she and her husband] would be the ones because she didn't think others in the church were strong enough in their faith yet to be able to handle it."

Another pastor's wife asked Martha for advice in how to share Christ with her family, some of whom were devout Muslims. Seeing a friend or family member's outlook on life change because of Christ tends to draw the curiosity and interest of those around them.

"This ripple effect of changed lives is having a significant impact," Martha says. "People are looking for answers."

## Using Old Testament

Southern Baptist workers provide training in theology and Christian life skills to Iranian believers who visit them. One of the most popular discipleship topics is how to build a marriage that honors God and each other.

Southern Baptist worker Darrell (name changed for security reasons) from Texas, starts Bible studies by review-

ing Old Testament prophecy, because Iranians have a beginning knowledge of it as part of their history. The stories of Daniel and Esther, for example, took place in what is modern-day Iran.

God's love for His people and pursuit of a relationship with them through Jesus Christ is a revelation to most Iranians because their Muslim upbringing has taught them a personal connection with God isn't attainable, Darrell says.

Misunderstanding the Trinity is often a barrier to the Gospel for Muslims, who believe that God is One and that Jesus was just a man, one of many Islamic prophets.

"I teach them to develop the habit of reading Scripture, not as a duty, but to learn and develop their relationship with the Lord," Darrell says.

# WHO'S MISSING?

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November 29 - December 6



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